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Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly: regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Security Council
Fifty-fifth year

Letter dated 4 October 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to attach herewith the report of the fourteenth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Bujumbura on 17 and 18 August 2000 (see annex).

The meeting made important recommendations and drew up a programme of work for the Committee for 2000-2001 which will require the support of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

I should be grateful if you would have the report circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 74 (a), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Marc **Nteturuye**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 4 October 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Report of the fourteenth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (Bujumbura, 17 and 18 August 2000)

Introduction

The fourteenth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa was held in Bujumbura on 17 and 18 August 2000.

The following States members took part in the meeting: Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Republic of the Congo. Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe did not attend.

Representatives of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity also participated in the work.

The opening ceremony featured:

A message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, read out by Mr. Jean Arnault, his Special Representative in Burundi;

A statement by the Representative of the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, Mr. Sylvain Ngung Etul Mpwotsh;

The opening address by H.E. Mr. Frederic Bamvuginyumvira, First Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi.

Adoption of the agenda

The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Report of the outgoing Bureau
3. Evaluation of the implementation of previous decisions and recommendations of the Advisory Committee
   (a) Establishment of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX);
   (b) Organization of joint military exercises in connection with peacekeeping operations between the armed forces of the countries of Central Africa;
   (c) Establishment of a subregional parliament in Central Africa;
   (d) Establishment of a subregional centre for human rights and democracy.
4. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa
5. Intergovernmental cooperation in security matters in Central Africa
6. Implementation of the recommendations of the Subregional Conference on the Proliferation of and Illicit Traffic in Small Arms in Central Africa
7. Report of the Subregional Conference on the Question of Refugees and Displaced Persons in Central Africa
8. Draft resolution on the activities of the Standing Advisory Committee
9. Date and place of the next meeting
10. Work programme of the Committee for 2000-2001
11. Other matters
12. Adoption of the report of the fourteenth ministerial meeting of the Standing Advisory Committee

Conduct of work

I. Election of officers

The Committee elected a new Bureau, as follows:

President:
Burundi

First Vice-President:
Democratic Republic of the Congo

Second Vice-President:
Central African Republic

Rapporteur:
Equatorial Guinea

II. Report of the outgoing Bureau

The Committee took note of the report presented by H.E. Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Chad, in his capacity as outgoing Chairman of the Bureau at the ministerial level.

The Committee welcomed the efforts made by the outgoing Bureau to discharge the mandates entrusted to it by the twelfth and thirteenth ministerial meetings, particularly the assistance provided by the Committee to ECCAS in organizing a meeting of experts in Malabo in order to draw up a draft protocol on the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX); the organization in Bujumbura of the Subregional Conference on Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in Central Africa; the awareness-raising among the countries of the subregion with regard to the need for signing and/or ratifying the Non-Aggression Pact; the organization of the thirteenth and fourteenth ministerial meetings, the steps taken for the effective launching of COPAX; and the establishment of a subregional centre for human rights and democracy.

III. Evaluation of the implementation of the previous decisions and recommendations of the Advisory Committee

(a) Establishment of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX)

The Committee welcomed the information provided by the Gabonese delegation on progress in the setting up of an early warning mechanism, and in particular on the refurbishing of the building made available to the mechanism by the Gabonese Government.

The Committee was also informed of the contacts currently under way between ECCAS and the Gabonese Government with a view to the early opening of the building that will house the headquarters of the early warning mechanism.

The Committee welcomed the progress achieved in the elaboration of terms of reference for the early warning mechanism, the Central African Multinational Force and the Defence Commission for the Central African Countries and encouraged the member countries to make every effort to ensure their prompt adoption.

The Committee welcomed the ratification by several member countries of the legal instruments governing COPAX and the Mutual Assistance Pact and called on countries that have not yet done so to take the necessary steps to ratify these instruments.

(b) Organization of military exercises in connection with peacekeeping operations between the armed forces of the countries of Central Africa

The Committee reiterated its interest in organizing joint military exercises.

It repeated its recommendation that a meeting of the chiefs of staff of the Central African countries should be convened in order to review the Biyongho-98 exercise, revise its costs downwards and determine the division of contributions among the different countries.

The Committee noted with satisfaction that Gabon, the country which is to accommodate the exercise, was prepared to host this meeting.

A mandate was given to the Bureau to take all the necessary steps for the organization of the meeting.

(c) Establishment of a subregional parliament in Central Africa

The Committee was informed of the continuing contacts between ECCAS and the Government of Equatorial Guinea on the subject of the project to establish a subregional parliament in Central Africa.

It welcomed the establishment of a network of parliamentarians from the Central African countries in Malabo on 24 June 2000.

A mandate was given to the Bureau to continue to follow developments and to report on them at the next meeting.

(d) Establishment of a subregional centre for human rights and democracy

The Committee congratulated the Cameroon Government on the steps that it had taken to start up the activities of the centre and noted with satisfaction the positive developments on this project, including:

- The wish expressed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that the centre should commence its activities in September 2000;
- The visit to Cameroon by two delegations from the Office to finalize the project with the local authorities and to that end to prepare a draft headquarters agreement and a memorandum of understanding between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the State of Cameroon and the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Cameroon;
- The information that the Secretary-General of the United Nations intended shortly to appoint a regional adviser to make arrangements for the operation of the centre;
- The offer by the Cameroon authorities of temporary premises at the Cameroon Institute of International Relations (IRIC).

In the interests of speeding up arrangements for the full operation of the centre, the Committee recommended that a meeting of experts from member countries should be organized in Yaoundé, with the task of finalizing the documents governing the organization and functioning of the centre.

A mandate has been given to the Bureau to take all the necessary steps to organize the meeting, in cooperation with the secretariat.

IV. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa

Burundi

The Committee welcomed the positive developments in the situation in Burundi and in particular the progress achieved in the Arusha peace talks, including the preparation by the mediator of a draft agreement on peace and reconciliation which gives grounds for real hope.

It expressed its support for the efforts of the Government of Burundi and all Burundians engaged in the search for a lasting peace for the country.

The Committee commended the mediator's efforts to date to bring peace to Burundi and encouraged him to work on the establishment of a framework for a speedy outcome to the peace talks.

It urgently appealed to the armed rebels to agree to take part in the current talks and called on all the Burundian parties to work for national reconciliation and renewed peace in Burundi.

The Committee called for the immediate proclamation of a ceasefire in order to put an end to the heavy loss of human life.

It urged the countries of the region, particularly those of the Great Lakes region, to help the people of Burundi to regain peace through dialogue and reconciliation and not to engage in violence and war.

The Committee appealed to the international community for substantial support for the peace efforts in Burundi by such measures as renewing their cooperation with the country.

Cameroon

The Committee welcomed the growing climate of peace and stability in Cameroon.

It expressed concern at the ongoing cross-border phenomenon of roadblocks, the illicit traffic in light weapons, small arms and weapons of war and the upsurge in organized crime.

It welcomed the determination of the Government of Cameroon to combat insecurity, the commendable efforts it had made in that regard and the notable success already achieved.

The Committee noted with satisfaction the creation in the country of operational structures to combat corruption and insecurity.

It welcomed the continuation of the policy of dialogue pursued by the Government of Cameroon by implementing a consensual democracy which would favour the country's harmonious development.

The Committee again expressed deep concern at the information provided by the delegation of Cameroon on the persistent attempts at infiltration and repeated acts of provocation by Nigerian forces on the Bakassi peninsula and called on the two parties to refrain from any action that could heighten tensions while awaiting the decision of the International Court of Justice, which Cameroon had seized of the matter.

The Committee, while reiterating its appeal to the international community and friendly countries to assist in maintaining the peace between Cameroon and Nigeria while awaiting the verdict of the International Court of Justice, requested the Court to take the necessary steps to ensure a rapid conclusion of the proceeding pending before it.

The Committee again urged Nigeria to comply strictly with the interim measures of protection laid down by the Court in its ruling of 15 March 1996 and called upon the two parties to refrain from taking any action that could create difficulties for the application of the final judgement of the Court.

Republic of the Congo

The Committee welcomed the effective cessation of hostilities throughout the territory of the Republic of the Congo.

It welcomed the results obtained by the Monitoring Committee in the implementation of the various clauses of the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities agreements, including those relating to:

- The resettlement of persons displaced both within and outside the country;
- The collection of weapons and ammunition of war; and
- The integration and rehabilitation of former members of the militia.

The Committee noted with satisfaction the easing of tension in the social and political climate in the Congo, the return to normal traffic conditions and other activities throughout the territory, the normalization of life in both city and country, the reopening of the Congo-Ocean railway and the adoption of the temporary post-conflict programme.

It encouraged the Congolese authorities and the mediator to organize a national dialogue, without exclusions, which would act as a culmination of the efforts undertaken to date and would encourage the renewal of the democratization process.

The Committee appealed to the international community to give its backing to the consolidation of peace in the Congo by increasing its support for the collection of weapons, the integration of demobilized young members of the militia and the implementation of the temporary post-conflict programme.

Gabon

The Committee was pleased at the climate of peace and political stability in Gabon, characterized by the free exercise of activities by political parties.

The Committee welcomed the measures taken by Gabon to strengthen national legislation for the protection of refugees with the establishment of:

- A National Refugee Commission;
- An Eligibility Subcommission; and
- An Appeals Office.

It was pleased at the strengthening of the cooperation between Gabon and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) by means of the signature of a letter of understanding authorizing a non-governmental organization to support the Office's activities in its current campaign in south-east Gabon.

Equatorial Guinea

The Committee welcomed the climate of peace and stability prevailing in Equatorial Guinea.

It noted with satisfaction the progress in the democratization process in Equatorial Guinea and the recent transparent municipal elections, characterized by

the participation of all the political parties and a high turnout.

The Committee commended the Government for its efforts to promote a culture of democracy in the country and welcomed the financial assistance granted to political parties for the elections.

It welcomed the policy of friendly cooperation pursued by Equatorial Guinea with its neighbours.

Central African Republic

The Committee welcomed the restoration of peace in the Central African Republic and the efforts made by the Government to consolidate the peace with the assistance of the United Nations Peace-Building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA).

It welcomed the establishment of participatory democracy in the Central African Republic, characterized by the presence in the Government of representatives of various political groups.

The Committee expressed its concern at the continuing acts of banditry carried out in the hinterland by means of roadblocks and noted with satisfaction the efforts made by the Central African Government to combat insecurity.

Chad

The Committee welcomed the continuing process of consolidation of peace and democracy in Chad, particularly the steps taken to prepare for the forthcoming elections through the promulgation of the act establishing the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI).

It encouraged the Chadian authorities to continue the policy of dialogue and reaching out to the opposition in order to arrive at national reconciliation among all Chadians.

It appealed to all parties in Chad to respond positively to this desire for dialogue and to give priority to conciliation in order to preserve the higher interests of the Chadian people.

The Committee took note with satisfaction of the positive outcome of the approaches made concerning the Chadian pipeline project and the approval of this project by the international financial institutions.

It also welcomed the opening of a UNHCR local office in N'Djamena.

V. Intergovernmental cooperation in security matters in Central Africa

The Committee took note with satisfaction of the actions and initiatives taken by the States members within the framework of cooperation in security matters, aimed at lessening tensions, combating insecurity in the border areas and making it possible to have exchanges between the various national structures dealing with these questions.

In view of the cross-border nature of most of the security problems in the subregion and the need to respond to them in a joint and concerted manner, the Committee again strongly recommended greater cooperation and dialogue among the security forces of the Central African countries, particularly within the framework of periodic meetings and the organization of joint operations.

The Committee particularly welcomed:

- The participation of Gabonese officers in the activities of the Monitoring Committee for the return of peace to the Congo;
- The tripartite security cooperation among the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola;
- Cooperation between the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic with regard to refugee flows and the safety of navigation on the Congo and Ubangi rivers.

The Committee expressed its concern at the administrative harassment to which nationals of the subregion are subjected in some member States. It recommended the intensification of high-level meetings between authorities of the member States, as well as regular meetings between border authorities, in order to prevent possible tensions arising from this situation and to consider ways and means of putting an end to them.

The Committee expressed its deep concern with regard to the upsurge in organized crime and insecurity in the countries of the subregion, particularly the development of the phenomenon of roadblocks. It

recommended the intensification of information exchange and the organization of large-scale joint operations to combat this scourge. It recommended that a high-level meeting should be held on the question, aimed at setting up a suitable legal framework for cooperation in the matter.

It stressed the need for closer cooperation among the security services of various countries with a view to combating the cross-border trade in stolen vehicles and, in this context, welcomed the creation in Chad of a unit to combat vehicle theft.

The Committee also recommended the creation of a fund to combat crime. The Bureau was mandated to study and propose ways and means of allocating sufficient resources to the fund.

Recalling the importance to the subregion's peace and security of the Mutual Assistance Pact concluded at Malabo in February 2000 among the countries of Central Africa, the Committee recommended that the Bureau should draw the attention of those countries which had not already done so to the need to sign and/or ratify the Pact by the end of 2000.

Aware of the need to strengthen cooperation for peace and security in the subregion, the Committee appealed to those countries that had not yet ratified the agreement on criminal police cooperation, signed in April 1999 at the meeting of the Committee of Central African Police Chiefs in Yaoundé (CCPAC), to take all necessary steps to proceed to the rapid ratification of this text and guarantee its full effectiveness.

The Committee also welcomed with satisfaction the decisions adopted at the third meeting of CCPAC, held in Yaoundé from 12 to 19 June 2000, particularly:

- The setting up in each country of a committee to monitor the activities of CCPAC;
- The creation of a framework for dialogue and cooperation among Central African directors of the *police judiciaire*;
- The holding in November 2000 of national consultations among crime control agencies;
- The harmonization of legislation in the countries of the subregion with a view to combating organized crime.

VI. Implementation of the recommendations of the Subregional Conference on the Proliferation of and Illicit Traffic in Small Arms in Central Africa

After reviewing the recommendations formulated by the Subregional Conference on the Proliferation of and Illicit Traffic in Small Arms in Central Africa, held in N'Djamena from 25 to 27 October 1999, the Committee welcomed the efforts of the countries of the subregion to implement them.

The Committee recommended that member countries should intensify measures to implement the recommendations of the Conference and, more generally, should spare no effort in the campaign against the proliferation of and illicit traffic in small arms, taking into account the dangers of this scourge for peace, security, stability and development in the subregion.

It welcomed the initiative taken by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and the Government of Canada for the development of a subregional programme to combat the proliferation of and illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, initially covering three member countries: Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Chad.

It recommended that member countries should participate in the ministerial meeting to be held in Bamako in October 2000, in order to arrive at an African position in advance of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be convened in 2001.

VII. Report of the Subregional Conference on the Question of Refugees and Displaced Persons in Central Africa

The Committee took note of the report and recommendations of the Subregional Conference on the Question of Refugees and Displaced Persons in Central Africa, held in Bujumbura from 14 to 16 August 2000, and commended the participants on the pertinence and quality of the results of their deliberations.

The Committee entrusted the Chairman of the Bureau with transmitting the conclusions of this Conference to member States and to the secretaries-general of ECCAS, OAU and the United Nations, with a view to gaining support for their implementation.

VIII. Draft resolution on the activities of the Standing Advisory Committee

The Committee considered and adopted the draft resolution on its activities to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session.

It recommended that all member countries should contact their permanent missions to the United Nations in New York so as to ensure their consistent support for the adoption of this draft resolution.

IX. Date and place of the next meeting

The Committee decided to hold its fifteenth ministerial meeting during the second half of March 2001 in Bujumbura.

X. Work programme of the Committee for 2000-2001

- High-level seminar on the organization and functioning of an early warning mechanism (Yaoundé, January 2001);
- Fifteenth ministerial meeting of the Committee (Bujumbura, second half of March 2001);
- Meeting of experts on the modalities and terms of reference for the subregional centre for human rights and democracy (Yaoundé, date to be determined);
- Meeting of the chiefs of staff in order to review the Biyongho-98 military exercise (Libreville, date to be determined);
- Organization of a subregional conference on the protection of women and children in armed conflicts (place and date to be determined);
- Sixteenth ministerial meeting of the Committee (place and date to be determined).

XI. Other matters

The Committee urged member States to make regular contributions to the trust fund intended to finance its activities.

Lastly, the participants welcomed the favourable climate that had prevailed throughout their deliberations and expressed their appreciation to the President of the Republic of Burundi, H.E. Mr. Pierre Buyoya, and to the Burundian Government and people for the warm welcome and fraternal attentions paid to them during their stay in Burundi.

Bujumbura, 18 August 2000